

Newsletter

December 2017

Partners in Aid

Enduring, Capable Communities

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THANKS TO OUR HELPERS THIS YEAR

We wish our helpers this year a Very Merry Christmas, and a peaceful and Happy New Year

Phillip McMillan – for printing our four newsletters per year at no cost to Partners in Aid.

Robin and Liz Zlonzak – for preparing the newsletters for posting.

Joanne McMillan – for support for the SEDS Child sponsorship program

Joy Handley – for her many years of dedicated work and support for the ABWU child sponsorship program

ALL our donors – whether it is for project work, child sponsorship or fundraising. Without this support we would not be able to assist the many families and their communities we do – in Bangladesh, India and the Philippines.

Bright Luncheon

Once again, the Bright Luncheon was a resounding success, raising just on \$4,500!! A remarkable effort, and you can read all about it in the pages to come.



**Thank
you!**

Child Sponsorship @ SEDS in India

Lyn Pickering – Sponsorship Co-ordinator



We are approaching the Christmas season and for many families in Australia this will be a wonderful family time of laughing, sharing, giving and eating. Not everyone in Australia will be that fortunate, and not everyone views Christmas the same way. I know there are many Partners in Aid donors who carry out special activities for others at this time and throughout the year, and your efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.

Other celebrations occur throughout the year when people come together, whilst recognising a different belief. The thing that I always hope to see which makes ALL celebrations throughout the year special, is people laughing together, sharing what they have, giving to their families and to those less fortunate, and enjoying the company of others around the meal table, perhaps this is too simplistic, but we do have to start somewhere.

The many wars and ill feeling towards others around the world is something that appears to be out of control. I wish I had the answer, but sadly I don't.

A donor friend told me the story of asking a group of people at a work Christmas party if they had thought of giving a gift to a project, or to sponsor a child as a group, instead of the little "KrisKingle presents" given out. He said people were horrified to even contemplate doing that. They could do both!!

This is OUR WORLD, only WE can make it better.

Sponsorship Program

I wish to send a BIG THANK YOU, to our donors who continue their support for children through the SEDS sponsorship program. Your support ensures that young people have an opportunity to remain in school. It is important to acknowledge our donors, as some of them have been sponsoring since the inception of the program in early 1995. During that time, a number of students have moved through the program with varying results, some outstanding, and the majority of the donors have taken a new child to support.

This past school year we had 30 students who sat their Year 10 exams. 24 of the students passed the exams the first time, and six students passed all exams except Maths. These six students were able to re-sit, with all but one successfully passing.

Sravani, topped the Mandal (something like for example the City of Casey where there are more than 200,000 residents). This is an exceptional result as the school she attended was not known for its academic achievement,

until recently, when younger and more innovative teachers arrived at the school. There were a number of other excellent results from the Year 10 students.

Success stories for previous students

When students complete their Year 10 studies, they are now considering higher education, through to a University degree. In letters to donors I have commented that a number of students who continue onto College will do so with either family or Government support. The latter support is given to students who are in a specific caste, although we are officially advised there is no caste system still operating. The important thing here is that the students do have an opportunity to go beyond what their parents and grandparents were able to achieve, and there is help available to do so.

The following students spent part of their school life at the SEDS farm/campus. This was due to loss of parents, grandparents or other family unable or unwilling to care for them. The one thing which they all commented on was their expertise in English which has opened up very good job opportunities for them. I met with some of them at the SEDS farm, but also travelled to the cities where they were studying to meet with them, sometimes a two-hour drive from SEDS.

Bhagya Rekha is 23 years old. Bhagya has a BsC in Computers and is now working on an MBA. She finances this with support from her family, and working as a Customer Care Manager for a bank, on a 2-year contract.

Ramakanth (Ram) Ram spent his Year 11 and 12 College years at the SEDS residential campus to enable him to study, with a view to attending University. He is in his 3rd year of a B. Electric Engineering, after which he will undertake a Masters degree. He receives funding from the Government for study, but he and family are responsible for accommodation and food. He gives talks to others to prepare for the work force.

Madhuri is 23, and in her 4th year of study at University. She lives in a privately funded Hostel with 22 girls, and they have a 9 pm curfew. Her fees and other costs are covered by the Government.

Vatsalya is 20 years old and has commenced her University degree. She also lives in the privately funded hostel. She enjoys singing, reading and piano classes. Her fees are also covered by the Government. Boarding in a hostel often means they must share a laptop with several other girls, and there is a roster operating.

Raj Kumar is 21 lived at the SEDS farm from Kindergarten to Year 10, and then went to a Government Hostel to complete his College years. He has completed a BCA (Computer Application degree) and works for one of India's largest companies. He is sharing a house with friends and they cook for themselves.

Madhan has completed his B. Mechanical Engineering, and has commenced a Masters Degree whilst working in different jobs to support himself. He also receives some support from friends of SEDS. He spent Year 8 – 10 at SEDS, and then attended a Government Hostel for College.

Ashwini is 22, lived at SEDS farm from a very young age and is in her 3rd year of a BSc in Chemistry. She is living in a privately funded hostel and receives support from friends of SEDS.

These are wonderful young people who have made the most of the opportunities given to them. Engineering Degrees have become the choice of more recent exit students, and I will be endeavouring to monitor some of them where possible.

To potential new sponsors – please consider sponsoring a child – in your name, for a family member, or do this as a friendship or work group. The rewards for the students are very obvious, but you might enjoy the experience as well. Contact me if you would like to know more at email – admin@partnersinaid.org.au – attn: Lyn



Sravani, who achieved the highest grades in her Mandal

If you are reading this online, click on the photo of Sravani to watch a video of her speaking about her sponsorship experience. Or, go to this link:
<http://partnersinaid.org.au/pia-sravani/>

**As per our policies, images of children appear with permission of their guardian.*

Keep in Touch



www.partnersinaid.org.au



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admin@partnersinaid.org.au

ITALIAN LUNCH IN THE COURTYARD

Joy Handley

Our 18th Italian luncheon was held in Bright on 30th October in the courtyard of Simone's Restaurant.

There were 65 people in attendance and it was without a doubt the coldest day we have ever had! And...IT POURED just as guests were arriving! Nonetheless it was a very happy day with lots of people, laughter and chatter! The magnificent sum of \$4,500 was raised bringing our overall total to in excess of \$50,000 over the years! A fantastic result. It is a big job, but enjoyable. We had a fantastic auctioneer, who made us all laugh a lot more and the auction brought in an excellent amount!

Of course, this event would never have happened if not for the generosity of Patrizia Simone of Simone's of Bright for her unending commitment to this for all these years. It was her idea to do a lunch in the first place and I thought it would be 'one off' - not so; she has been so dedicated to raising money for ABWU all this time and this year only arrived back from Italy on the Saturday, lunch was Monday and she had to make all the pasta and sauces. I don't know how she did it, but she did!! Up until last year her son, Antony was always involved in the event and her husband, George, has been a wonderful back stop and worker also in setting up the restaurant, setting tables and putting away; you name it George has done it! A wonderful and massive commitment to make and they have

done it with so much enthusiasm I am in awe of them.



Patrizia Simone & Joy Handley



Guests enjoying the lunch

ABWU

Anne-Marie Maltby - Project
Director

Emails from ABWU tell us that the girls have been busy making

Christmas cards. Of course, those girls doing courses and living in hostels outside the Home may not have the opportunity to get a card to us but we know their sponsors forgive them and accept that the girls appreciate what they are doing, or at least, that is our hope!

The weather in West Bengal was particularly hot this year and the staff and volunteers struggled to keep going. There was the usual flooding and cases of malaria; things that we luckily don't have to cope with here. It's not surprising that reports and correspondence are often quite delayed.

ABWU have been quite excited about their fairly recent inclusion in a Professional Youth Exchange Programme for one year funded by FK Norway and have had two girls selected for a project.

The project they are involved in "equips personnel and young people of partner countries (Bangladesh, Nepal and India) with excellence skills on vocational education and training for improving organization and sectoral development as well as increasing employment opportunities". FK Norway pays a moderate salary for participants and also covers expenses for travel, stay, insurance and language course.



The exchange partners involved with the project along with ABWU are Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB) and Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN)

The first participant in the program was Rekha who arrived at ABWU as a young orphan with a heart condition needing major surgery. She struggled with studies and her health through her time at the home and the ABWU ladies were extremely caring and supportive. Rekha had been sponsored by the Rotary Club of Carrum Downs and Seaford for many years until she obtained a job house-keeping at a hotel. She was subsequently selected to represent India in the Exchange Program. Along with another participant from India, she went to Bangkok in October 2016 for the Training Program and then proceeded to Bangladesh for the exchange. In October 2017 all the participants met in Bangkok before returning home.

ABWU's hope was that Rekha would learn and mature during this exchange and give her new perspectives in attitude. She hopes she is now more equipped to work in a NGO, which is her wish rather than go back to the house-keeping job at the hotel. She hopes to be able to give back to the community in the same way that she has been supported since she arrived at ABWU.

This has been a wonderful opportunity for Rekha and she is very grateful to ABWU and her sponsors. She sent a thank-you from Bangladesh where she was working as F.K. Exchange Fellow in a project that empowers young people through vocation education that said: “I am really happy that I got this change. I am thankful for our support in making all of this possible for me. Thank-you so much for believing in me and making my future bright and beautiful”



The second participant is Ankita who has just started working in Bangladesh and this is her thank-you letter which reminds us.....

WHY PARTNERS IN AID VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS DO THIS.....

“I am Ankita Roy. I am the only child of my mother, Karabi Ghosh. I was admitted along with my mother in All Bengal Women’s Union Shelter Home on 28th January, 2014. Both of us were really traumatized, distressed and homeless and ABWU provided us with care and shelter for which we both are extremely grateful. My mother became a psychiatric patient and was under treatment.

Two months later, in March 2014, I appeared for my School Final exams with the help of ABWU. I cleared my Board exams with good marks. Thereafter, ABWU helped me to pursue my education and approached Partners in Aid, Australia for support towards my education. I was

able to clear my Higher Secondary exams and thereafter, got admitted into College to pursue B.Sc. I am extremely happy to inform you that with the help and assistance from ABWU, Partners in Aid, Australia and my kind sponsor, today I am a Graduate.

I would also like to inform you that ABWU has selected me to participate in an Exchange Program which is funded by FK Norway. The training will be conducted in Bangkok from 15th to 21st October, 2017. Thereafter, from 1st November, 2017, I will be working in Bangladesh with an NGO. Though I am very excited, at the same time, I am a little apprehensive since this will be the first time I will travel to a foreign country. I know it will be a wonderful opportunity for me. At the same time, I will also miss my mother because we have never stayed without each other.

I am sure with the blessings of all my elders in ABWU, Partners in Aid, Australia and my very kind sponsor, I will be able to accomplish great things in the future.

A big thank you to each one of you who has helped me to come this far.”

Joy and I think that this letter exemplifies why Partners in Aid supports the projects that we do and why our supporters are so loyal. They know that our support has a powerful ability to absolutely change lives and slowly improve the communities they live in. That makes us all feel good!

Around The Projects

It has been a very busy time for Partners in Aid, with our AGM held mid-November, and our Sinangpad director busy organising a project visit. The remoteness of Kalinga means logistics are tricky! Full project reports will be in the March newsletter, together with other news from the AGM, however here now is a bit of a wrap up of the projects.

Singangpad Healthy Village Project: The SHVP celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. Since its inception over 60 communities have participated in the SHVP, and most have made sustained improvements to at least some aspects of their environmental sanitation. Community Health Development training was carried out this year in 3 new villages who had not previously been involved, and some revision was done with another village where the impact to date has not been significant. The training this year reached 480 people, and the flow on is the development of community action plans to help villages to continue improving their environmental sanitation. It is very exciting to think of how many people and communities are now living with increased knowledge, understanding and practical concepts to improve the health of themselves, their families and their community as a result of this project.

Symbiosis, Bangladesh:

TTIS Project: this project was set up to provide technical training to adults to assist them with developing income-earning activities. Partners in

Aid currently supports groups with sewing and embroidery classes, which run in various locations. The participants selected are very poor people who would not have otherwise had an opportunity to receive training. About one third of trainees have purchased sewing machines following their training (through self-help group microcredit system), which has given them the ability to work and contribute income to their families. It is wonderful to see these trainees grab the opportunity to improve their lives.

Jamuna River Development Project: the project is located on a sand island in the centre of the Jamuna River, which is subject to annual flooding and gradual movement due to erosion and deposition by annual floods. The aims of the project are to bring groups of women together, assist the women with basic literacy and life skills education, and facilitate the running of microcredit systems within Sustainable Groups (small self-help groups). The amount of support required varies from group to group, however the groups stay together for many years and generally reach a point of requiring only limited support from time to time. Recently 14 groups were judged to have reached a level as to no longer require field workers assistance, and an additional 6 groups have become significantly more independent, which is a fantastic outcome. As well as assisting the women in the community, the project provides pre-school education and support the primary school to provide teachers and education supplies.

Success story of Ruksana

Ruksana is 25 years old and married to Lutfar Ali. They live in village in Shirajganj District, Bangladesh with their son and daughter. Ruksana wanted to attend in school but she could not do it as she was married at early age.

Her husband works as a day labourer which is a very uncertain source of income. When the Symbiosis JRDP project surveyed her village, she joined a class and after 8 months of FE education she fulfilled her dream of learning to read and write. After completing the class, she became a group member and started to save. She eventually bought a sewing machine with her savings. She learned sewing work and started sewing. Soon she became known for her work and increased her income.

After paying back the loan money she bought a cow and after a few months she sold it for a good profit. She took out a mortgage and asked her husband to work her land. Both husband and wife grow vegetables in the field to sell.

Now Ruksana is happy to see a fixed income for her family and a secure student life for her children.



Ruksana with her sewing machine

We often get letters from our supporters thanking our staff for the great job they are doing. As many are already aware, Partners in Aid is run almost totally by unpaid volunteers. The only exception that comes to mind is we pay for the services of an auditor to audit our annual financial returns. The organisation runs through the input of the voluntary members of Board and project committees. So whether it be operating our financial system and transactions, keeping our many sponsors informed, or trawling through government red tape to keep us compliant with laws of the land, there are some dedicated volunteers at work making it happen.

If you want to help, the very best thing you could do is convince another person or group who is not currently a donor, to become a donor to Partners in Aid. This is something everyone can do. We could slash our administrative costs if we had a pro-bono financial auditor to oversee our annual returns, so if you know such a person, put them in touch with us.



Ruksana and her cow

Christmas Gifts and Donations

This Christmas why not consider making a donation to one of our projects as an alternative to buying a traditional gift for family or friends? You'll be making a very positive difference to the lives and prospects of disadvantaged and vulnerable people, while avoiding the shopping hustle and bustle and queuing for a parking space too!



You can also make a general project donation if you prefer, or set up a child sponsorship at ABWU or SEDS. A general donation will be used in supporting any of our projects needing funds at the time of your donation.

We are happy to provide a gift certificate on request; please email us if you would like to arrange a gift.

Here are some ideas for each of our project areas.

Sinangpad, Philippines

Any donation towards helping communities make their village environments healthier through:

- ❖ Training villagers in community health development and facilitating their planning to create a healthier village
- ❖ Mentoring villagers implementing plans to make their village healthier
- ❖ In some cases, providing funding for materials necessary to enable villagers to construct simple infrastructure such as toilets and pig pens to reduce health risks, especially to children.

Symbiosis, Bangladesh

- ❖ Writing materials and books for school \$15 per set
- ❖ Kitchen garden materials \$50
- ❖ Super Kris Kringle – sponsor women's self-help group (\$500/year for a group of 20)

ABWU

Any donation towards:

- ❖ The orphans' holiday fund
- ❖ Sewing supplies
- ❖ School text books

SEDS

- ❖ \$15 provides a fruit tree for the Low Carbon Farm orchards
- ❖ \$50 provides fish fingerlings for the full water tanks
- ❖ \$240 to sponsor a Low Carbon Farming group for one year

Any donation towards:

- ❖ Medical fund for students

Complaints Policy

All complaints should be addressed to the Board Chair and will be treated seriously, acknowledged promptly and resolved within two months.



Partners in Aid is proud to be registered with the ACNC, a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, and registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria. Whilst compliance is an onerous task for a volunteer organisation, we are committed to maintaining transparency, in which you can be confident your funds are going to where they are needed most – to those in India, Bangladesh and the Philippines.



ACFID CODE

ACFID Code of Conduct

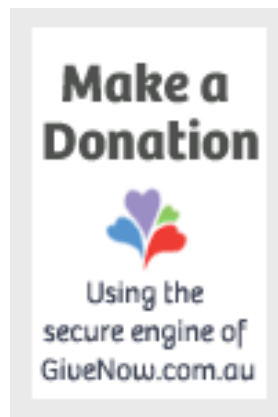
The ACFID Code of Conduct is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing transparency and accountability of signatory organisations. Partners in Aid is committed to the Code, of which we are a signatory and have been for many years.

If you feel Partners in Aid has breached the ACFID Code of conduct you can visit <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/complaints> to make a complaint directly to ACFID.



Membership is only \$25 a year, and goes a long way in our administrative costs, ensuring donated funds go to the projects not postage stamps!! Membership also entitles you to vote at our AGM, or nominate a proxy.

Please contact us if you're interested in taking on a membership.



GiveNow is an initiative of the Our Community Foundation, a not-for-profit program established through the financial support of www.ourcommunity.com.au and Westpac. Their manifesto is:

"You have the power to make a difference, to build a better community, to shape our country, our world."

Partners in Aid is registered with them, which means you can make a donation using their secure, online portal at this link:

<https://www.givenow.com.au/partnersinaid>

As we have noted in earlier newsletters, you can enjoy quality wine and support Partners in Aid projects at the same time. For every case of wine sold, a proportion goes directly to Partners in Aid, with no overhead costs.

For further detail, go to:

<http://www.goodwillwine.com.au/charities/partners-in-aid>

You can order wines or buy gift vouchers.



You can make a donation to Partners in Aid through PayPal. You can select a specific item, such as fish fingerlings for tanks in India, or a general donation. Making a general donation gives the Board of Partners in Aid the greatest flexibility in using your contribution. Please use the comment field in the Paypal form if you would like your general donation to go to a project or item not listed on our donation page, at this link:

<http://partnersinaid.org.au/how-to-help/>

PayPal™

Partners in Aid Donation Form



Partners in Aid

Donations

I would like to make a general donation to Partners in Aid

\$

I would like to make a donation to (circle/note where applicable):

ABWU (orphan trip/sewing supplies/books/self-defense training support)

\$

SEDS (stationery/health check-up/bee hives/fruit trees/fish fingerlings)

\$

Symbiosis Bangladesh (stationery/garden/sewing machine/women's group support)

\$

Sinangpad Healthy Village Project (toilets, vegetable patches, community health)

\$

Child Sponsorship

I would like to begin/continue (please circle) to sponsor a child at ABWU/SEDS (Cost is \$260 per child per year, + optional annual gift \$20)

___ children

x

\$260/280

=

\$

Membership

I would like to begin/continue (please circle) to be a member of Partners in Aid

\$ 25

Total amount enclosed (donations and child sponsorship)

\$

If paying by EFT please email admin@partnersinaid.org.au for bank account details. If paying by cheque, make it out to Partners in Aid and send to PO Box 42, Narre Warren LPO, VIC 3805

Name for receipt: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email (for newsletters and occasional updates): _____

Gifts of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible (receipt will be issued)

Thank you for your support

Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.